

SO YOU WANT TO BE A DX'er?

By AA0MZ

You want to jump in the pileup? Are you ready to chase that DX? Make sure you have plenty of tickets for the ride. Here are some tips on how to get the DX, operate legally, and not be a Lid. Also some tips on how to get along with fellow operators. If you can remember the first 3 tips you pretty much have everything you need.

1. Be considerate.
2. Listen to the DX station.
3. Follow instructions. If the DX station says he is listening up (or down) then make sure you have your rig set for split operation and transmit in the portion of the band he is listening. He will also give important information such as his call sign, QSL information, etc. If you didn't hear it, listen and he will repeat it again.
4. BEFORE TRANSMITTING ON A FREQUENCY, ASK IF THE FREQUENCY IS IN USE. This includes split operations. Make sure you listen to your transmitting frequency and make sure it is clear before you start operating "split" and listening elsewhere. Give people time to find you and respond to your "QRL?" Sometimes they are nearby and need to tune around to find where the QRM is coming from. Don't just ask once. This leads to the inevitable, "The frequency is in use!" angry remark and the pathetic, "I ASKED if the frequency was in use" reply. Ask a few times and give someone a chance to respond.
5. Just because everyone else is doing it doesn't make it right. As your parents used to say, "If your friends jumped off a cliff, would you?" Follow the rules your license gives you. There are some really poor and illegal operating practices out there. Don't get caught up in it.
6. Stay in your authorized frequency range. If the DX is operating in the extra class portion of the band and you are not an extra class licensed operator, stay out. If the DX station is operating in a portion you are not allowed to be....DON'T GO THERE!
7. Don't be a DX cop! As tempting as it may be to tell someone "Split" "Up" "Lid" "Shut up" etc on the DX frequency, don't. It only causes more QRM. The offending station will eventually get a clue and be embarrassed. 99% of it is an honest mistake. The other 1% is intentional QRM from anti-social losers who still live in their parent's basements. They only get their jollies by hearing the above remarks. If no one says anything, they get bored and move on.
8. Don't ask the DX station if he can move to another band if he is working a pileup. You are denying others a contact so that you can have several. This makes you a DX pig and pisses off the 1,000s waiting for their contact!
9. Don't identify your station by using "last two" or any other portion of your call sign, even if the DX station asks for it. (If you have legally identified your station and you want to get on the DX station's list then it is ok to give them whatever ID they request. AS LONG AS YOU HAVE LEGALLY IDENTIFIED YOURSELF!) You must legally identify your station according to the rules you agreed to when you got your license. Asking for and using portions of a call sign encourages illegal operating and is poor operating practice. It slows down pileups because the DX station has to ask a station to complete its call rather than catching it in one transmission. Some DX stations refuse to work stations giving out their "last two." Just

because there are 100 Lids shouting their "last two" and they have extra class calls...don't join in. They are just extra class Lids.

10. If the DX station asks for certain zones or areas then don't respond unless you are there. If they say "Caribbean only" doesn't answer if you are in the U.S. If they say "9's only" don't answer if you are in call area 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 0. If the DX station comes back to a portion of a call, i.e. "the 3PTX again", and you are not a 3PTX, don't answer. It sounds easy, doesn't it? You'd be amazed...

11. It is common for DX stations to say "West Coast only" or "East Coast only." They forget the U.S. is a big country and there are many in the middle (0, 5, 8, 9). This is like a U.S. IOTA station working a European pileup and saying, "CT, EA, F, and G only" and then saying, "EZ, RA, UJ, and UN only." This wouldn't make the DL, ES, I, LA, LY, OE, OH, OK, OM, ON, SM, YL, YO, YU etc very happy. (Are you reading this DX stations?) Anyway, it is hard to tell what is West Coast or East Coast (sometimes referred to as "The Wall"). Some people think 6's and 7's ONLY are the west coast. So a guy in Cheyenne, WY is west coast and a guy 40 miles south in Ft Collins, CO (a 0) is not. Doesn't make much sense does it? Some think the East coast is 1's, 2's, 3's and 4's. If you are waiting for DX to say "Midwest only" you will never work a country. You be the judge if Omaha, Nebraska or Oklahoma City qualifies as west coast or east coast. I think the general consensus is the Midwest is neither east nor west coast and gets passed over unless there is a generic CQ call. Not fair? Yeah, and it isn't fair that North Dakota is colder than Florida. It would be better if they said "East (or West) of the Mississippi." Needless to say, a zero answering a call for "West coast only" may generate some complaints from 6's and 7's. Until the DX learns to say "Midwest only" or "West of the Mississippi" you're on your own here. I figure if the DX meant 6's and 7's only he'd say so. Probably what they really mean is, "I would like to get beyond the East (West) coast Wall calling me." If you are a 1, 2, 3, or 4 don't answer "West Coast only" and if you are a 6 or 7 don't answer "East Coast only." If you think that is a mess, the middle provinces of Canada don't get a fair shot in either "by the numbers" or "by the coasts."

12. If you can't hear the station give his call sign or instructions then you can't work them. Don't interrupt the pileup with dumb ass questions such as "Who is the DX?" "Who is the manager?" "Where is he listening?" etc.

13. "Work first, worry later" (WFWL). If you aren't sure if the station is real or a pirate/slim work them anyway. You can always figure out later if it was a waste of time. Too often this has become "Work First, Listen Later" (WFLL) which is bad operating. Listen and know what you are doing. Nothing is more stupid than an operator asking, "Who did I just work?" (The correct answer is "no one" because if you didn't get their call....you didn't work them. To get the call from someone else is an assisted, spoon-fed contact).

14. If you have already worked the guy, give someone else a chance. Keeping a guy from working a new one so you can tell a DX station he is louder than he was yesterday makes you a DX pig. Too often the DX pigs will say, "I just wanted to jump in here and tell you that you have a terrific signal today." The DX knows this; that's why he has a pileup.

15. If the DX is working pileups don't try to engage him in lengthy conversation. "So what rig are you running? How's the weather?" You probably really don't care and are just showing off to the 1,000s of hams waiting that you are an ass with a lot of money wasted on a huge station. If you really care about the weather and such then look it up on the internet.

16. If the DX station is having ragchews then don't interrupt for a contact. DX stations should be allowed to enjoy their hobby too. Contacts with family and friends are part of that. It could be a missionary or serviceman who is having an important and rare contact home. They too may be chasing their own awards. Don't be a jerk by interrupting every exchange with "break" just so you can get another country.

17. Don't try to "help" a station. If the DX is having trouble copying a station and they say, "again?" do not help out. For example, if the DX station says "AA0 give me your suffix again" and you tell the DX "MZ, MZ" and the DX says "Roger AA0MZ", the DX station DID NOT work AA0MZ.....he just worked a guy relaying AA0MZ and you just screwed someone out of a contact. Keep quiet and let the DX work the station WITHOUT YOUR HELP. It is tempting to relay when you can hear both stations clearly but you are defeating the purpose of the contact. The purpose is to see if the DX can work a particular station, not to work you. Don't "help" because you are too impatient and just can't wait for your turn. This makes you either a jerk, a DX pig, or a little of both.

18. If you won't say your call sign, whatever it is you have to say is not only illegal it is wrong. If what you have to say is right, you'd give your call sign. So....next time you have the urge to say "Up! He's working split, idiot!" ask yourself if you are willing to say "this is (your call sign)" afterward. If not...shut your hole.

19. If a QSO is going on frequency and you hear a DX station under it do not interrupt. Do not shout over a New York station talking to a California station so you can work the Pakistan station in the background. Ask the stations if you can use the frequency if you want it that bad.

20. If you are on a frequency and have met there every Thursday at 2200 for the last ten years, so what. If a DXpedition shows up there and someone asks you nicely to move, don't be an ass. It wouldn't hurt you to move or let the meeting go for a day. Yes, the DX should ask if the frequency is in use. Sometimes they don't hear you. Being an ass to prove your point will only make you an ass.

21. Your license requires that you use minimal power to make a contact and reduce QRM as much as possible. Using a KW and your scheduled buddy in Iowa remarking you are "20 over 9" means you can drop it back to 100W. The current trend to "wideband sideband" audio is also intentional QRM. The whole purpose to SSB is to cut down on band use...making a SSB signal intelligible on AM is really defeating the purpose. Yeah, you get that Hi-Fi studio quality sound....you are also an ass taking up valuable space. If you want to operate like that, take your wide signal to the AM portions of the band and you and your audio buddies can have your daily 5 hour, "How's My Audio?" lovefests there.

22. QSLing sucks. Filling out 1,000s of cards every year just because you happen to live in Burkina Faso is no fun. Hell, living in Burkina Faso may be no fun. QSL cards cost money and the DX operator may be more concerned with feeding his family than buying a QSL card for your collection. Send a SASE, some greenstamps, whatever makes it easier. Don't just slap a stamp on a QSL and mail it like a postcard. They get tore up, marked up, and smeared etc by postal machinery especially if forwarded to another address. Put it in an envelope with an SASE. If you are in the U.S. put "U.S.A." on your SASE. Georgia is not just a state, it is a country too...and Rhode Island may just end up in Greece, so just put "U.S.A." on your SASE and make it easier for delivery. Remember, some countries have trouble with postal theft so don't immediately assume you didn't get your card because the DX operator is a thief. If the QSL is the last courtesy of the QSO then YOUR last courtesy should be to send an SASE with appropriate funds. (This is true for both domestic and DX QSLing.) If you think QSLing <<http://www.qsl.net/aa0mz/qsling.htm>> is easy, volunteer to become a manager.

23. Be patient. Wait for the QSL card. It may take years. It may be important to you to get a card from Sri Lanka. He probably has plenty of cards from Texas. The bureau process is slow.

24. No matter how mad you may get, intentional QRM is illegal. This is a hobby. If it isn't fun, turn off the rig and go do something else.

25. DXing is a self rewarding accomplishment. If you feel good about making a contact on a net, getting assisted contacts, lying on your DXCC sheets then go ahead and stick that certificate on the wall. Some people measure their manhood in number of countries worked, length of their antennas, or output of their rigs. Don't get caught up in that. It is not a race. It is a personal accomplishment. If you are proud of making 300 countries with a KW, then fine. If you are proud of making 100 with 1 watt, then fine. If you are proud you were able to get your net control assisted contact, then fine. Just remember in the grand scheme of things...nobody really cares. If your manhood is wrapped up in DXCC totals, antennas, and power...you are seriously lacking in self worth (and rightfully so.)

26. Use phonetics. The great OM before us created them for a reason. Many letters sound the same if not said phonetically. "KA" and "K" can sound the same but "Kilo" and "Kilo Alpha" are clearly different. Bad trend to just saying your call non-phonetically slows down the pileup and leaves room for errors. "Kilo Golf?" "No, Kay Bee" "Kilo Charlie?" "No, Kay Bee" "Kilo Bravo?" "Yes!" Avoid the cutesy stuff. Save it for your local 2 meter club and CBs. "Alpha Bravo 2 Yankee Doodle Dandy" or "Wiggle Wiggle 2 Oink Oink Oink" is not exactly common words the DX station may understand. It might be cute with the boys on your net or at the club but it comes across pretty stupid when working others.

27. Be mindful of where people meet. The ARRL Considerate Operators Frequency guide is a start. Holding a domestic ragchew in a DX window is rude. Chasing DX on a SSTV frequency is rude. No one owns the frequencies so it is not illegal for a North Dakota - South Dakota QSO in a DX window or on a known DXpedition frequency...but is it really considerate? No one has the right to run anyone off of a frequency if it was not in use when they got there regardless whether you think it is the IOTA frequency, net frequency or whatever. Remember there is a fine line between asserting your "rights" against common held practices and being an ass.

28. Intentionally calling long winded CQs and "checking long path propagation" while near others may not be technically illegal; however, everyone knows you are purposely QRMing and are being an ass. You might as well be calling "CQ P5 Stations only;" the QRM intention is just as obvious. Meaningless conversation on a frequency to just occupy it and irritate others also is being an ass. These ops are prime examples of the fact that longevity on the radio does not necessarily diminish the ability to act like a Lid. There are many ops who have been acting like Lids since they got their license back in 1957. There are Old Timers (OTs) and then there are Old Time Lids (OTLs). There are people who have had drivers licenses for years. They have driven thousands of miles. It doesn't matter how many years they have been behind the wheel, they are still crappy drivers and I wouldn't sit next to them. There are some ops like that. It doesn't matter how many years they have been behind the mike or how many countries they have logged, they are still crappy operators (lids). DO NOT FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLES!

29. Radio operators are segments of society. There are asses in your town, church, workplace, etc. That doesn't mean you want them in your home. So if you run across one of these radio asses who has their manhood and self worth wrapped up in acting like a jerk, just spin the dial or turn off the rig and don't let them into your home. By all means don't act like them. Remember, these jerks consider themselves to be top notch ops...everyone else is a Lid. You can't teach them anything because they think they know everything and feel you should emulate them. They live for the audience. That is why they have the big signals. They spend their money on amps and antennas and meet with their own kind for the purposes of mutual admiration in circle jerk fashion. If no one was listening they would quit. So don't join in on the cat calling, QRMing, etc. Don't bother trying to reason with them either. The only reasoning they will understand is when they get the letter from the FCC and they start appealing their lost license and \$10,000 fine.

30. Like it or not, you represent your country to the rest of the world when you are on the air. Try to leave an impression your fellow citizens can be proud of. If you act like a Lidiot on the air, you may leave the

impression to those that hear your signal that everyone who is a citizen of your country is a Lidiot. While it is interesting to talk with DX stations and learn about their customs, holidays, weather, geography, etc it is generally not good to approach subjects such as politics and religion. "So how is it living under that dictator down there? I heard he killed a bunch of men for listening to a radio." "Is it true you worship cats? I hate cats, I'm more of a dog person." You get the idea. Besides, not everyone has the freedom to discuss things you may have...and that can make it uncomfortable and difficult for the DX station.

31. Some people don't think "real" DXers hang out and work DX on nets and lists (list lizards <<http://www.qsl.net/aa0mz/spoonfed.htm>>). This is because some perceive it as easy as "catching fish in a barrel" and too often the net control stations are "spoon-feeding" the DX to ops and assisting both sides of the contact. Assisted contacts are not valid for DXCC. If you submit them, you are submitting a false claim. Does it matter? If you are happy that a net control operator can assist you by relaying your contact then that is your business. Many will think you should probably see if you can get the net control's callsign also listed on the certificate next to your callsign. After all, you didn't do it on your own....you did it with assistance. If you work them legitimately (no assistance) there is nothing wrong with using nets for DXCC.

32. DX clusters are helpful in spotting DX. Some people think it is not "real" DXing to use a cluster. This is because "in the old days we didn't have DX spots, we had to find them ourselves." Using a DX cluster is ok in terms of DXCC rules, as long as you copied the station on the air and are not getting the DX call from the assistance of a cluster spot. Keep in mind its intended purpose is in spotting DX so that others will know where to find the DX and from what part of the world it is being heard. Being the 27th person in an hour to post that you got a DX station serves no purpose other than to brag to people who don't care. If you see a post on the DX cluster, that means you don't have to post it. Posting the same station over and over again only hides the other DX spots. Don't self spot (tell everyone where you are operating), post that you can't hear the DX at your location, or post that you worked them. If your post will do no good for anyone else then don't post it. If you want to test the cluster to see if you are hooked in ok then put your own callsign as the DX station, not some rare prefix. Like the QRMers, there are asses on the cluster. Ignore them and avoid the temptation to post responses. This just excites them to post more crap. Without an audience, they go away. Keep in mind that many of these asses post on the cluster with some else's callsign. Be careful who you get angry with, don't make it a ham who is the innocent victim of a cluster crab acting like an ass. These are the same guys you hear answer in high pitched voices when a DX station asks for "YLs only." These "Radio Fairies" lack the essential equipment of men leaving them gender confused.

33. Don't get addicted to the cluster. There is a lot of DX out there that will only respond to CQs because they hate pileups, want to ragchew or don't have the time for working many stations. There are also stations calling CQ that you may find before the pileup gets there. Remember there are 1,000s of ops staring at the cluster (cluster crabs) and all pounce when there is a spot. Chances are better in getting the contact if you find the DX before anyone else does.

34. Research the proper QSL routes. If they want it direct, via a manager or a bureau. If they prefer IRCs or greenstamps and how much does it take. All of this is available on the computer, magazines, and on air chats. **DO NOT HARASS THE MANAGERS WITH REPEATED QUERIES OR PHONE CALLS TO THEIR HOMES.** They are dealing with thousands of cards, are usually volunteers, and looking for individual attention only makes the job harder. Use common sense. If it is announced that all cards have been sent then go ahead and request again. If it has been 2 years since you sent it via the bureau...ask around and try again.

35. Get the best antenna you can. Antennas are more important than power. A good antenna will not only let you be heard over the crowd, you can hear signals others can't hear. An amplifier may get your signal out, but it won't help you receive any better.

36. Know propagation. Much of this comes from experience. This is where your skills can put you above the others. Calling DX at noon on 40 meters won't do you much good. Knowing that at 10 o'clock at night you can work India over the North Pole on 20 meters may give you an edge.
37. Get the information on your QSL card right. Remember to use UTC. Check the date. Remember that at 0001z it is a new day regardless of where you live. Anything you can do to make the DX station/managers life easier is appreciated. Should he have to go through logs and logs of QSOs to find your QSO because you were too lazy to fill it out right? You know how quick you are to go clean out the garage? You would rather put it off and play with the radio, right? What do you think the station/manager would rather be doing?
38. Respect whoever had the frequency first. If you answer a CQ from DK7QRP and at the end of the QSO G3QRT calls you, don't start up with a QSO. DK7QRP had the frequency first and G3QRT probably doesn't know that. Ask G3QRT to find a frequency you can QSY to and tell him it is not your frequency. If DK7QRT is done, he will probably tell you it is ok for you to remain on frequency.
39. Be mindful of where you are in the sunspot cycle. If you are around the peak, work 15, 12, and 10 meters as much as you can. Those bands will all but disappear when the cycle hits its minimum. At minimum you can concentrate your efforts on 40, 80, and 160 meters.
40. Let the DX station manage the pileup. You can't hear what the other stations hear. Don't assume that when the DX station said, "Kilo 3 Romeo something comes again?" the "Whiskey 5 Romeo" who responded heard him clearly. Saying "Whiskey 5 Romeo, you don't sound like Kilo 3 Romeo to me!" just makes you a Lid DX cop and your QRM adds to the problem of people not hearing the DX station. What YOU can hear clearly is not indicative of what other stations can hear. Let the DX station do the managing of the pileup. If you have the need to manage a DX station pileup, go join a net and see if you can become net control.
41. Don't tell the DX station in the middle of the pileup, "I've got a buddy here who would like to work you. His call is W5LID...listen up for him." You are holding up the pileup and the DX station already is listening up for him and everyone else. If you think he deserves special treatment over others then that makes you and him a DX pig. Besides, you just made an assisted call because the DX station got the call sign from you, so your buddy didn't really work him, did he?
42. Don't ask the DX station to check to see if you are in the log from a previous contact on another band or mode. This denies others a chance to make a QSO while the whole world waits because you think you are someone who deserves special attention for your multiple QSOs. This makes you Grade A #1 USDA certified DX Pig!
43. Don't tune up on the DX transmit frequency. If for some reason you need to tune up on the air, first listen to see if the frequency is in use. Next, ask if the frequency is in use and identify with call sign. If clear, start tuning.
44. Remember EVERYONE makes mistakes. Give people a break! The best well known DXers sometimes transmit on the wrong frequency or do some other bonehead thing. Don't jump in with the pack of wolves and start tearing ops apart. It is becoming more and more common for DX cops to be ugly in their self ordained "law" enforcement. These "Barney Fife's of the airwaves aren't satisfied with saying "He's listening up!" Now it is "Go read the manual!" "What does UP mean to you?" "You're a (lid, idiot, etc)." Remember, it is a power thing for them. DON'T DO IT! New ops may abandon the hobby if their introduction to DX'ing is abuse from jerks. Potential new operators won't join because they don't want to be a part of that. Some ops are elderly and the mind and the body doesn't work as well as it once did. You wouldn't yell at your grandfather like that, would you? We ALL make mistakes. Be kind and give guys a break.

Remember, these are just my (AA0MZ) tips. Everyone has their own opinion on what a "real" DX'er is. You just do what makes you happy as long as you operate legally and don't ruin the operating wishes of others (in other words, be considerate). If you listened to the P5 pileups you would find that if there are rules, few follow them. DX'ing in pileups is competitive. Many operators are chasing the one DX station. So all that you have read and heard about the brotherhood of amateur radio will often be trampled when it comes to pileups. Often times it is nothing more than a bunch of cocks in a cockfight and the biggest cock wins. Geeez...grandmothers at K-Mart were killing each other over cabbage patch dolls all in the Christmas spirit of giving. So you can imagine how it can get. Keep operating in the manner you can be proud to attach your call sign to and avoid becoming one of the Lids, pigs, or asses. Have fun. Depending on your approach to DX'ing, it can either keep you young or it can age you quickly. Always keep in mind it is just a hobby and amateur radio is a service for communications outages and emergencies first and foremost. Now grab your tickets and go DX'ing!!!!!!!!!!!!